

**BITS OF TRAVEL.****XII.****CITY OF MILAN.**

BESIDES being the grand capital of Lombardy, Milan is the seat of an archbishop, and is one of the wealthiest and most prosperous cities of Italy. Large manufactories of silk and woolen goods afford employment to many thousands of the inhabitants and supply the staple commodities of the province. In its patronage of Art, it takes a leading rank among the cities of the kingdom; sculpture more particularly engaging the attention of its artists. In this department so many people are employed with such success that it has become a special industry. The Milanese sculptures are

remarkable for their faithful imitations of nature, and have attained a wide notoriety for the technical skill which characterize them.

The chief picture gallery of Milan is in the Brera, formerly a Jesuit college. It also contains the library of the academy, founded in 1170, comprising two hundred thousand volumes, a collection of fifty thousand coins and an archaeological museum. In the principal court is a bronze statue of Napoleon, as a Roman emperor, with a long staff in his left hand and a statue of Victory in his right. It is above life size, and is considered one of the best works of the artist, Canova. The gallery contains up-

wards of eight hundred paintings, the gem of all being Raphael's far-famed *Sposalizio*, or the Nuptials of the Virgin, a picture about which crowds always linger in admiration and wonder. It is surrounded by choice productions from the hands of Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Tintoretto, Bellini, and of foreign artists, Rubens, Vandyke, Rembrandt and many others.

The centre of business and life in Milan is the Piazza del Duomo facing the cathedral. From it radiate the principal thoroughfares and the Victor Emanuel Gallery. The latter is the most remarkable structure of the kind in Europe. Many cities abroad have arcades and covered galleries in which are located fine shops for the sale of all kinds of fancy goods, pictures, *bric à brac*, etc., but of them all, this one in Milan takes the leading place. It extends a thousand feet, is fifty feet wide and is a hundred feet high, being covered by an artistic ceiling. It is in the form of a Latin cross, with an octagon in the centre, over which rises a handsomely decorated cupola, one hundred and eighty feet high. The frescoes on the sides of the octagon represent Europe, Asia, Africa and America, while those over the entrance arches are emblematical of Art, Science, Industry and Agriculture. The gallery is illuminated at night by two thousand gas-jets, which are lighted almost instantaneously by a small engine with clockwork attachment. The sudden flood of light over the ten thousand articles of beauty, displayed for sale, is an effect quite novel and attractive.

The Biblioteca Ambrosiana is worth visiting, for the purpose of seeing the ancient manuscripts which it contains, among the twenty thousand that fill its archives is a collection of original drawings and letters by the great master Leonardo da Vinci; a copy of Virgil with marginal notes by Petrarch; fragments of a manuscript copy of Homer, illuminated, dated the end of the fourth century; and letters of Tasso, Galileo

and other eminent scientists. The library contains one hundred and forty thousand volumes, some of which are very rare and valuable. Not far from this building is the suppressed monastery of St. Maria delle Grazie, now occupied as a cavalry barracks. It however is the centre of attraction to all artists and many thousand connoisseurs of art, who clamor for admission at its gates that they might behold, upon its walls, the celebrated painting of Leonardo da Vinci: "The Last Supper." The picture is in bad preservation, there being many copies extant that have a much brighter and more satisfactory appearance. Notwithstanding this fact there is much truth in the following observation of an eminent critic:

"Deplorable as is the condition of the "Last Supper," the chief work executed by Leonardo during his stay in Milan, the original alone exhibits, to its full extent, the emotions which the master intended to express and which even the best copies fail to reproduce. The motive of the work has been well explained by Goethe; 'The shock by which the artist represents the company at the sacred repast as deeply agitated, has been pronounced by the Master's words, 'One of you shall betray me.' They have been pronounced; the whole party is in dismay, while He himself bows his head with downcast eyes. His whole attitude, the motion of his arms and hands, all seem to repeat with heavenly resignation, and his silence to confirm the mournful words—It cannot be otherwise. 'One of you shall betray me.'"

Proceeding from the barracks, a short walk brings one to the oldest church in Milan. It is that of St. Ambrogio, founded by Saint Ambrose in the fourth century, on the ruins of an ancient temple of Bacchus. It was, with all the buildings of Milan, almost entirely destroyed by the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in the year 1162. It was rebuilt, however, and has stood in its present form since the twelfth century. The gates of the



church are represented as those which St. Ambrose closed against the emperor Theodosius after his return from the massacre of Thessalonica. Within the church are very ancient mosaics, earlier than those of Venice, representing the Savior and the life of St. Ambrose. In the nave is a very interesting relic, the identity of which the under credulous may question. It is a brazen serpent upon a column and is said to be the one, which was raised by Moses in the wilderness.

The Lombard kings and the emperors of ancient Germany formerly came to the Church of St. Ambrose to be crowned with the celebrated Iron Crown, which previous to the reign of Barbarossa was preserved within its treasury. It has since that time been in the custody of the Cathedral of Monza, a few miles in the suburbs of Milan. This cathedral is something of a remarkable structure, dating back to the year 595, when it was built by Theodolinda, the queen of Lombardy. It contains in a casket, forming the centre of a richly decorated cross over the altar, the famous crown of iron with which thirty-four Lombard kings were crowned. The venerable relic was last used at the coronation of the Emperor Charles V, of Napoleon, in 1805, and of Ferdinand I, in 1838. It consists of a broad hoop of gold, adorned with precious stones, round the interior of which

is a thin strip of iron, which is reported to have been made of a nail from the true cross, brought by the empress Helena from Palestine. In 1859 the crown was carried away by the Austrians, but was restored in 1866 to its former repository.

In the treasury of Monza Cathedral are preserved several articles of historic interest, among them; a hen with seven chickens, in gold, made by order of Queen Theodolinda, to represent Lombardy and its seven provinces; there are also two silver loaves, presented by Napoleon after his coronation; the cross which was placed upon the breast of the Lombard Kings at the moment of their coronation: the goblet of Berengaria, and a mummy of one of the Visconti, dated 1413.

We have not space in this article to linger about the many old churches in and around Milan, nor to speak of the parks, the theatres, among them the world renowned Scala, where the great prima donnas make their debuts, the beautiful streets and promenades, art collections, hotels, and a hundred other wonders, the last and greatest of which, the eighth wonder of the world to the Milanese—the great cathedral of Milan, will form the subject for our first sketch of Travels in Italy, to begin with the next volume.

*De Vallibus.*

## TRAVELS IN ITALY.

## XII.

## NAPLES AND POMPEII.

THERE are but few points of interest in the town to attract the visitor to Naples. It is the largest city of Italy, containing nearly half a million people, but it is the dirtiest; its streets the narrowest and most irregular; its houses possess the least architectural beauty, their window balconies and flat roofs becoming monotonous in the extreme, as one passes through the interminable streets and alleys always finding them the same. We were struck with the appearance of the tall, narrow houses. They seem to be built with the back yard in front. Everything that usually characterizes back yards being found between the front door and entrance gate, particularly close lines, strung, however, with coils of macaroni instead of linen. From all the windows, even to the sixth story, the blinds are hung outside and flutter loudly in the breeze, adding perceptibly to the din and clatter of the streets below. Naples is the noisiest city in the world. At all hours of the day and night, the never ceasing rumble of wheels over the rough pavement, the cracking of whips, braying of donkeys and shrill shouting of hawkers, make day and night hideous; while added to this are the insolent importunities of drivers, guides, street-vendors of canes, fans, corals, fruits and a thousand other things, and the appeals of the *lazzaroni* or beggars, who besiege you on every hand and almost block your way through the principal thoroughfares.

Besides the National Museum and two or three churches, there is nothing in the town to engage a tourist's time; but the environs of Naples abound in all that is grand, beautiful and sublime to enlist his closest attention and occupy him for days or weeks most profitably. The situation of the city is one of the most charming in the world. The glorious bay of Naples has from the earliest times been the object of enthusiastic admiration. It is visited annually by thousands of strangers from all parts of the world in quest

of health and pleasure. The pleasantest view of the bay is from the sea; approaching it by steamer on a fine summer's day, the scene is one of unparalleled loveliness. The islands of Ischia and Procida guard the entrance from the north, while beautiful Capri lies away at the entrance of the bay to the south. A steamboat trip round this wonderful body of water, called by the poets "a fragment of heaven to earth vouchsafed," is indescribably delightful. By moonlight it is the perfection of romantic scenery.

A voyage to Capri is well repaid by a visit to the Blue Grotto, a most singular cavern at the base of a perpendicular cliff rising from the sea. The entrance is from the water, and is effected in the following hazardous manner: On the steamer's approach to the grotto, a number of small skiffs, capable of holding two passengers besides the oarsmen, put out from the shore, and coming alongside the vessel, take aboard the venturesome tourists. A few moments steady rowing brings them to the face of the frowning wall, which rises abruptly from the water a hundred feet or more. There is no break in this solid wall but at the base, when, as the waves recede, a low narrow aperture, not three feet high is discovered. The boat makes for this small opening, the passengers lie down upon the bottom with their heads scarcely peeping above its sides, the boatman drops his oars, and taking advantage of the hollow of the incoming wave, seizes the rock above him, and with a tremendous pull and a loud "open sesame," forces the little craft through the magic entrance. What a glorious sight! What dazzling azure and glimmering silver tint is here! The effect of the blue refraction of the light on every object is indescribable. The grotto is forty feet high and a hundred feet wide by two hundred in length. Near the middle is a kind of landing place with broken steps leading to a closed passage above. Upon the landing are a number of boys, waiting for passengers to toss coins in the water, when they dive for them and catch them



before they sink. Their appearance in the water is most curious, their bodies having a silvery glow which contrasts singularly with the bronze of their sun-browned faces above.

The attractions about Naples, aside from her lovely bay, clear sky, orange and olive groves and Vesuvius, are Pompeii and Herculaneum. There is a deep, solemn interest pervading the breast of every visitor who treads the silent streets of excavated Pompeii, "the city of the dead." The roofless, strangely constructed houses, dreary, unoccupied shops, temples and column-supported theatres in ruins, are all so strange, so foreign that we fain exclaim:

"What wonder this?—we ask the limpid well,

O Earth! of thee—and from thy solemn womb,  
What yield'st thou?—Is there life in the abyss,  
Doth a new race beneath the lava dwell?

Returns the Past, awakening from the tomb?

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The earth, with faithful watch, has hoarded all."

Pompeii is mentioned in history as early as 300 B. C. It was at the time of burial, August 24, in the year 79, A. D., a provincial town of twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. These were engaged in commerce, the town being near the sea. The city, however, was the resort of wealthy people, the nobles of Rome having villas there. The restored town indicates, as nothing else in the world can, the character of its society of two thousand years ago. The houses of Pompeii are of peculiar construction, being unlike any of modern times, except those of the far east, in Persia and India, which in some respects resemble them. Their chief peculiarity is the internal court, which provided the surrounding chambers with light, and was the medium of communication between them. This court is approached by a narrow passage leading from the street. The front portion of the house, usually a wide, open aperture, was occupied as a shop—or place of business, while the apartments opening on the court or atrium as it is called—were devoted to the domestic household. The upper stories, (there is evidence that many houses were three stories high) were occupied by slaves and servants.

The decoration of the houses of Pompeii was manifestly the great delight of her ancient citizens. The most profuse and elaborate painting of the walls in grotesque and beautiful forms and pictures, employing the most brilliant colors, attest the artistic tastes of Pompeians and the high perfection of art her painters had attained.

In the year 63, A. D., a premonitory earthquake shook the walls of the city and a large portion of its houses to the ground. The inhabitants unheeding this threat from the fiery regions below, speedily rebuilt their beautiful city, employing concrete in the construction of their houses. This was plastered over with cement, upon which the drawings and magnificent paintings were made. When the eruption of Vesuvius occurred in 79, the city had attained a larger growth, and possessed more fine, though perhaps cheaper houses than before the earthquake. The awful day of doom that buried the fair town from the view of man was heralded by a dense shower of ashes, which covered the streets to a depth of three feet. The cessation of this premonitory deluge allowed the inhabitants time to escape; but many returned, some after their valuables, others paralyzed with fear, not knowing whither to fly. It is estimated that two thousand persons perished in the subsequent outpouring of red hot *rapilli* or pumice stone, burning lava, boiling water and seething cinders and ashes which submerged the ill-fated city, and completely covered it over to a depth of twenty feet. There it remained forgotten through the middle ages, and only preserved in name by a small village that sprung up near its site.

Excavations were undertaken in 1748, the attention of the authorities being attracted by the accidental discoveries of a peasant who unearthed some statues and bronze utensils. From this time search for valuables was begun and progressed at various times with great rapacity, notably during the reign of the Bourbons, who in their eagerness for the works of art and value, took no care to preserve the walls and buildings. Under Murat,

however, the Forum, town walls, the street of Tombs, and many private houses were carefully brought to light. The most satisfactory progress, however, has been made in the excavations since 1860. Under the present management a regular plan is adopted, and though only about one-third of the town is yet uncovered, it is expected the work will continue until the whole shall be resurrected, though it will require seventy years and several million dollars to accomplish the task.

The skeletons of about a hundred human beings, some dogs and horses have been discovered during the later excavations. Great care has been taken to preserve everything in its exact position, by those in charge. To illustrate this, we remember noticing the perfect skeleton of a prisoner, the chains about his wrists and ankles. The iron-barred door to the prison, and every feature of the room, were left as they were discovered, only the debris, ashes, etc., being cleared

away. What a sight was that to call up the sympathies and wonder of the soul!

The frescoes or painted plaster from the walls, have in many instances been conveyed from Pompeii to the National Museum at Naples, which also contains bronzes, and utensils of every description taken from the ruins. The high, well preserved coloring of the paintings is remarkable. The subjects suggest a very fast, immoral life, that doubtless made the judgment which decreed the destruction of Pompeii a just one. Many signs besides, remain to indicate how the Pompeians were a people given to luxury, indolence and sin. Their theatres, baths, places of assignation and rendezvous are coming to light. The future will see the whole of that most marvelous city; the resurrected city of the dead, which shall be brought to light, but not to life again, by the laborious efforts of science, aided by the curiosity and admiration of a wonder loving world.

*De Vallibus.*